

REMARKS

Amendments of the claims

Claims 1 and 12 have been canceled without prejudice. The subject-matter of claim 1 has been incorporated in claim 3. Minor language corrections have been made to claim 3. The dependency of claims 3, 5 and 6 has been amended accordingly. The subject-matter of claim 12 has been incorporated in claim 14. The dependency of claims 13, 15 and 16 has been amended accordingly. Grammar amendments have been made to claims 7 and 17. No new matter has been added.

Allowable subject matter

Applicants acknowledge with gratitude the Examiner's indication of allowability as to claims 7-11.

Claim 3

Claim 3 has been rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of base claim 1. Original claim 3 was dependent on claim 2, but the subject matter of claim 2 has not been incorporated into claim 3: claim 2 only recites that the "first" and "second" level of claim 1 are "low" and "high" level. Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of claim 2 is not necessary to distinguish over the prior art. Consequently, the language of claim 3 has been amended to recite only "first" and "second" levels as in original claim 1.

Further, the Applicants note that in the original language of claims 1 and 3, the first, second and third switches were always turned "off". This was inconsistent with the operation of the first, second and third switches as disclosed in the specification, and in particular page 4, lines 13-14 for the first switch, page 4, lines 26-27 for the second switch, and page 5, lines 8-10 for the third switch. Accordingly, the language of amended claim 3 has been corrected to recite that the first, second and third switches are "on" when their control terminals have the first (or low, as recited in claim 2) level. Applicants thus expressly note that this amendment was not made for reasons related to patentability.

Claim 14

Claim 14 has been rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of base claim 12. Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 14 is patentable over the prior art.

Claims 4, 16, 17

Applicants submit that claims 4, 16 and 17 are patentable at least in view of their dependency on claim 3 or claim 14.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102

Claims 1, 2, 5 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,163,193 to Kamiya.

Claims 1 and 12

In the interest of moving this application to issue, Applicants have cancelled independent claims 1 and 12 without prejudice and expressly reserving the right to present these claims in a future divisional or continuation application.

Claims 2 and 5

Claims 2 and 5 have been amended to be dependent on claim 3. Applicants submit that claims 2 and 5 are patentable at least in view of their dependency on claim 3.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 6, 13 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamiya in view of U.S. Patent Application No. 2002/0171400 to Koyama. Claim 6 has been amended to be dependent on claim 3, and claims 13 and 15 have been amended to be dependent on claim 14. Applicants submit that claims 6, 13 and 15 are patentable at least in view of their dependency on claim 3 or claim 14.

* * *

In view of the above, Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance and respectfully urge the Examiner to pass this case to issue.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required or credit overpayment to deposit account no. 12-0415. In particular, if this response is not timely filed, the Commissioner is authorized to treat this response as including a petition to extend the time period pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) requesting an extension of time of the number of months necessary to make this response timely filed and the petition fee due in connection therewith may be charged to deposit account no. 12-0415.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Post Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on
March 17, 2005

(Date of Transmission)

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March 17, 2005

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